

Toyota Shifts Focus to Support Detroit's West Side by Donating Winter Boots and Socks to Detroit's Grandale Neighborhood

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DETROIT (Jan. 20, 2023) – Seeking to provide support in various Detroit neighborhoods in need, Toyota Motor North America stepped in for the 12th consecutive year to support a local Detroit community through its “Walk In My Boots” community outreach project. On Saturday, January 14, 2023, more than 150 family members from The Salvation Army (TSA) Detroit Grandale Corps Community Center neighborhood on Detroit’s west side received new insulated winter boots and socks to help shield families from the cold.

Winter can often be the hardest time of year for many low-income families. With snow and freezing rain, nothing gets cold faster than wet feet. People can be at risk for severe hypothermia and consequences can be fatal. While some programs offer winter coat, hat and glove giveaways, a person’s feet are often left exposed as many families take the bus or walk in the harshest of cold weather.

“Sometimes it’s difficult to imagine going without – like not having a pair of quality boots on a cold day,” said Major Bob Mueller, Metro Detroit Area commander for The Salvation Army of Metro Detroit. “This year’s ‘Walk in My Boots’ event hit close to home for me because I grew up in Detroit’s Grandale neighborhood, and I

know firsthand about the need in this community. Sturdy boots and warm socks are life-changing in frigid Michigan winters. Thankfully, 150 of our community members are better equipped to weather the storm thanks to the generosity of our partners at Toyota Motor North America.”

It was a great afternoon as Toyota brought a ray of sunshine and warmth to the families. One family member said, “I am so grateful to Toyota for giving my family these boots. My kids don’t have to walk to school in the cold without boots, and my feet will be warm too.”

With this project, in Detroit alone, Toyota has donated over 2,200 pairs of boots and socks to local families and contributed over \$160,000 to The Salvation Army Great Lakes Division. Sharing resources throughout the Detroit Metro area, boots and socks have been given to families in need on Detroit’s east side at The Salvation Army Conner Creek Corps Community Center, in downtown Detroit at TSA Booth Services Shelter, Head Start and Harbor Light facilities and at the former TSA Denby Center for Children & Family Services on the northwest side of Detroit. The project has also been held in Chicago; Washington D.C.; Baltimore; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

“Many people know Toyota as a car company, but we’re so much more than that,” said, Bill Shelmon, executive project manager, R&D Advanced Product Planning Office, Toyota Motor North America. “We are passionate about serving in the communities where we live and work. With so many people in need due to the recent pandemic crises and economic downturn, it’s a major reason why Toyota continues to do whatever we can to ensure Detroiters are getting the help they need.”

The Salvation Army Detroit Grandale Corps Community Center provides outreach to the community through social services such helping families and individuals pay their utility bills when faced with financial crisis, free fresh produce and canned goods through the food pantry, weekly women’s ministry and church services. Efforts are underway to expand services in the spring. Toyota also donated \$15,000 to The Salvation Army Great Lakes Division enabling them to continue to support the communities they serve. A delicious hot luncheon was served to the families as well.

Shelmon said, “What better day to bring this project to Detroit families then on the weekend celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” Shelmon mentioned one of Dr. King’s quotes, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is ... ‘What are you doing for others?’” He said, “Toyota is answering the call by supporting those in need and transforming lives...one step at a time.”